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## Book Reviews

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## Book Reviews

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## BOOK REVIEWS

### *Behind the Big House: Reconciling Slavery, Race, and Heritage in the U.S. South.*

By Jodi Skipper (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2022. Foreword, Acknowledgements, Introduction, Epilogue, Appendix A, Appendix B, Notes, Bibliography, Index. Pp. ix, 218. \$27.50 paper. ISBN: 9781609388171.)

Jodi Skipper's *Behind the Big House: Reconciling Slavery, Race, and Heritage in the U.S. South*, captures the dual and interwoven nature of how slavery is remembered or omitted through contrasting interpretations of historic homes in Holly Springs, Mississippi, providing a personal roadmap of community-focused activism and its partnership with academia. The nature of her book hinges on two words, "priority" and "why." The scope is essentially a two-fold analysis of the Behind the Big House program in Holly Springs and the corresponding Marshall County program, Gracing the Ta-

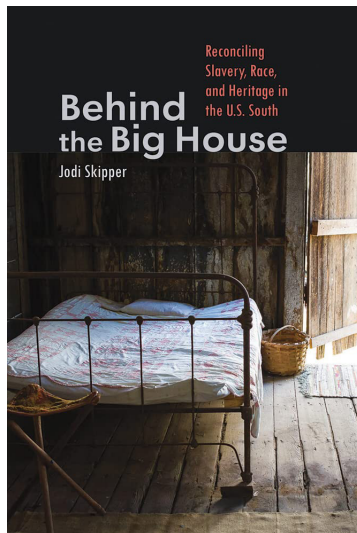
ble. The former is aimed at providing agency to previously overlooked enslaved people and the structures that housed them, often adjacent to the more frequently visited main homes on antebellum pilgrimage trails, hosted by the Holly Springs Garden Club. The latter illustrates how the lives of diverse individuals behind Gracing the Table have enabled a space

for discussions and events centered on racial reconciliation. The dual nature and scope of Skipper's book might initially seem to be trending towards a few different directions for the reader. Yet, Skipper contends and

demonstrates that these components can fit together as puzzle pieces towards a more equitable representation of the past and greater present awareness.

Skipper's thesis, rooted in her position as both an activist and public anthropologist, is that these programs provide a more inclusive model for historic home preservation and tourism, while serv-

ing as spaces for community engagement and reconciliation. Yet, going back to the keywords of "priority" and "why," Skipper contends that just as her own personal journey has been one of continual navigation, historic home preservation and tourism programs contain myriad forces that complicate a clear path to desired outcomes, depending on the vantage



point of the stakeholder. These currents include divergent community receptiveness, bureaucratic priorities, varying degrees of participation, and funding hurdles. Skipper's main contribution to the scholarship is in demonstrating that the localized Behind the Big House and Gracing the Table programs collectively provide broader models of the antebellum South, with a realistic portrayal of the successes and challenges facing such work. *Behind the Big House* fits into an evolving field of literature. While her audience can be defined as both general and scholarly, Skipper's work can be considered alongside notable titles, such as John Michael Vlach's *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (University of North Carolina Press, 1993), and more recently, *Remembering Enslavement: Reassembling the Southern Plantation Museum* (University of Georgia Press, 2022), authored by Amy E. Potter, et al.

Skipper achieves most of her objectives, presenting these programs in Mississippi as positive models, shedding light on the agency of not just the formerly enslaved but also a diverse group of contemporary actors, such as Chelius Carter, Jenifer Eggleston, David Person, Alisea Williams McLeod, and Rhondalyn Peairs. Skipper effectively connects the dots between historic home sites, tourism, efforts at racial reconciliation, and the journeys of participants. However, in the second chapter, "Heritage Tourism in Mississippi," while setting the context of what is promoted or forgotten through blues music tourism, Skipper makes no mention of the partnership between the late Bill Luckett, a White

former city mayor and member of the NAACP, and one of Mississippi's most famous residents, actor Morgan Freeman, in their purchase of the Ground Zero Blues Club in Clarksdale. If one is to make the argument that blues music has been promoted by the state at the expense of African American artists, what about private investment and the corresponding mission of such participants, across racial lines in Clarksdale?

Additionally, chapters one and five could be drawn closer together in sequence. Sources vary from personal reflections, interviews with program participants, blogs, political and tourism sources, to secondary sources on public history and slavery. The book is well written, although through an autoethnography approach, which as a historian, took some initial adjustment. Skipper is candid and readers should appreciate the conversational tone throughout. Scholars will appreciate her inside take on integrating student involvement as part of her curriculum, as well as personal reflections of bridging community-based work and academia. Recommended for readers interested in Holly Springs history, Mississippi history, public history, tourism, southern studies, and historic site management and equitable representation.

Matthew R. Lempke  
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***Gin, Jesus, & Jim Crow: Prohibition and the Transformation of Racial and Religious Politics in the South.*** By Brendan J. J. Payne. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2022. Pp. 304. \$45 hardcover. ISBN: 0807171486.)

Policy development is a complex process that can vary by location and time period. Religious and racial factors have also exerted significant influence during America's history of cultural conflict. Brendan Payne demonstrates this in his 2022 book, *Gin, Jesus, and Jim Crow*, which examines the prohibitionist period from 1885 to 1935. Payne, chair of the Department of History at North Greenville University, coins the term "Gin Crow" to signify the era in which Jim Crow laws coincide with southern Prohibition. He uses a wide collection of primary sources to compile this work, including denominational convention minutes, local newspapers, and election data. Not only is Prohibition questioned in this account, but also Christian liberty, political norms, and racial fairness.

Early portions of *Gin, Jesus, & Jim Crow* highlight the variance among southern denominational leaders during earlier stages of the Prohibition movement. While Christian rhetoric was shaped by both southern drys and wets, Payne brings attention to "the neglected role of Christian rhetoric for wets" (7). In doing so, readers are exposed to a mixture of theological and denominational approaches toward this issue. Payne's rendering of the late-1880s transition from traditional teachings to new scriptural interpretations is interest-

ing, particularly his commentary on the two-wine thesis (recognition of Biblical references to both alcoholic and nonalcoholic wine). Such instances steered the eventual evolution from communion wine to modernized Christian rituals. Ultimately, Payne contends that earlier statewide votes for Prohibition failed not because of Black voters' influence, but rather due to southern ministers' inability to unify the vote of their congregation.

Most of Payne's work centers on the political undercurrents of the 1880s and early-1900s. Readers will discover that while Whites were often split on the issue, Blacks were essentially regarded as swing votes. This spawned interracial coalitions between brewers and Black wets—including Black ministers—that impacted statewide elections in locations such as Florida (1910) and Texas (1911). Payne uses this and similar instances to showcase how the Prohibition dispute "roused African Americans who saw an opportunity to regain the political clout they enjoyed during Reconstruction" (45). As the position of White drys was threatened, Jim Crow's purpose of maintaining White supremacy through disfranchisement and voter suppression became a tool to fulfill the interests of southern drys. Thus, as Black votes decreased and the local option replaced statewide bans, Prohibition gained a lasting presence throughout the South. Ultimately, Payne states that "resistance to prohibition in the 1910s represented the last great show of Black electoral strength in the South against Jim Crow voting restrictions until the Voting Rights Act" (110).

Readers may think of Jim Crow and the enactment of prohibition as two disconnected subjects; however, *Gin, Jesus, & Jim Crow* weaves the content into an appealing and comprehensive work. As a result, it may become difficult for some readers to view Prohibition without thinking of the racial component. Yet, those expecting Mississippi to have a large presence in this book will be disappointed. Payne references a limited number of statewide restrictions (i.e., the 1839 “gallon law” and an 1865 Black Code banning the sale of liquor by people of color) and its prolonged Prohibition policy following the 21st Amendment. Otherwise, the book is more attentive to episodes from other states. Readers in search of Mississippi’s Prohibition history can turn to sources such as Janice Branch Tracy’s *Mississippi Moonshine Politics* (2015). Nonetheless, the substance of *Gin, Jesus, & Jim Crow* effectively describes the role of alcohol in altering southern society.

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***The Women’s Fight: The Civil War’s Battles for Home, Freedom, and Nation.*** By Thavolia Glymph. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020. Acknowledgments, figures, notes, bibliography, index of names, index of subjects. Pp. 379. \$37.50 cloth, \$27.95 paper. ISBN: 9781469653631.)

*The Women’s Fight* places women’s political activity at the center of the story of Civil War America.

Thavolia Glymph’s work provides a much-needed corrective as Black women’s “politics and their wartime struggles remain largely invisible” despite the substantial scholarship of the conflict (10).

While historians have made progress deconstructing the artificial boundary between home front and battle front, Glymph’s work builds on that foundation and merges it with the work historians have done in broadening concepts of what activity should be understood as political in nature. Glymph explains how the war involved all women in both formal and informal struggles for power. Her work points out that the very existence of White women refugees in the South directly chipped away at the Confederate project. Black southern women developed “anti-slavery politics through their lived experiences” (93). Just about every move made by enslaved women in wartime displayed the weakness of pro-slavery arguments and indicated a refusal to accept limits on the war’s potential to redefine power. *The Women’s Fight* also explains that while White northern women of some means “turned their parlors into factories” (132), poor and working-class women also sacrificed for the Union, often as labor in their wealthier counterparts’ homes. Unionist women also vied with each other to make sure that aid agencies deployed hard-earned supplies to their men. White northern women, however, failed to conceive of their Black female contemporaries as capable of the same level of political identity in the conflict. Black women, North and South, repudiated the notion that the war was a primarily

White affair.

An essential part of Glymph's contribution is to connect these various groups of women using the touchstone of the political nature of home, a framing that has been used by historians in their quest to understand the conflict, but which Glymph applies with unprecedented breadth. Civil War era women from disparate backgrounds all relied on an understanding of home that linked freedom and citizenship. The Civil War created new versions of old tensions rooted in that essential foundation. From White southern women sleeping on the roadsides, Black southern women rooting themselves behind Union lines, to both races of northern women's domestic economies, Glymph shows how women understood each other in relation to those concepts encapsulated in the idea of home. Her model is sure to inspire similar ambition in future studies of women in American conflicts.

A strength of the book is its scope, as it is not devoted to one group of women, gathered by race or region. Readers of this journal, however, may be especially interested in how the story Glymph tells played out in places like Mississippi, or the lower Mississippi Valley generally. In this region, enslaved women, White southern women, and newly arrived northern women (responding to the humanitarian crisis in Union-occupied territory) all advanced their political agenda, grappling with each other and federal forces to influence and understand the war. Confederate-leaning White southern women behaved so fiercely as to force the U.S. Army to reconsider the status of women as non-combat-

ants. Black women, experiencing a statelessness that White women did not, made high-stakes claims on U.S. Army territory and resources. The federal government leaned on Black women's labor but was not necessarily committed to offering consistent protection to women refugeeed from slavery. In fact, many soldiers resented their presence.

Not only should *The Women's Fight* be assigned to students at both the undergraduate and graduate level, but it should be on the shelves of every Civil War era museum and interpretive site and employed in training docents and interpreters. The public is always interested in women's "roles" (as they usually put it, which has always struck me as resigning women to adjuncts or auxiliaries) in the Civil War. But too often, the story is limited to the image of isolated White women in safe, quiet, apolitical homes dutifully rolling bandages waiting for news. While the academy has moved far beyond such an image, Glymph's book utterly obliterates it, offering an impressively comprehensive view of women shaping the war, not watching from the sidelines.

Kelly Houston Jones  
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***Until I Am Free: Fannie Lou Hamer's Enduring Message to America.***

By Keisha N. Blain. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2021, Acknowledgements, notes, index, image credits, about the author. Pp ix, 181. \$12.97 cloth, \$24.95 paper. ISBN-13:9780807061503)

Keisha N. Blain's *Until I Am Free* is one of the most recent biographies about the incredible civil rights activist, Fannie Lou Hamer. In this biography, Blain centers the voice of an impoverished and disabled Black woman whose contribution to the Black freedom struggle is overlooked in mainstream scholarship. In doing so, *Until I Am Free* is a bottom-up approach to chronicling the civil rights movement as it prioritizes the voice of an ordinary Black woman and centers her philosophy on issues concerning poverty, state-sanctioned violence, and grassroots activism. A majority of the chapters begin by blending contemporary issues with past problems to accomplish the goal of the book which is to show, "Hamer's words are timeless," and that her advice "offer[s] hope and guidance for those of us who are committed to social justice today" (xviii). Showing that today's social issues mirror obstacles that Hamer worked to resolve, Blain is confident that present freedom fighters can apply her ideology to solve contemporary struggles.

*Until I Am Free* argues that mainstream accounts of Black social movements prioritize the movement activity of men, and when Black women are championed, it is the same few activists. Blain contends, "however, the historical record is far richer and

more interesting than many realize, including a diverse array of activists and leaders from different classes and walks of life" (ix-x). With a compelling argument, Blain expands the historical record by inserting Hamer's activism into the public memory of the civil rights movement. She adds to the historical scholarship on Black women's participation in the civil rights movement in general, but to the historical canon on biographies about Fannie Lou Hamer, specifically. Joining these historians, Blain is urging her audience to reimagine the civil rights era by placing marginalized Black women at the center.

Blain invites the reader into the life of Hamer by highlighting the ways Hamer's upbringing impacted and shaped her future organizing philosophy. She inherited her mother's determination and acquired her father's faithfulness to God. Furthermore, Blain uses Hamer's life as a lens to illuminate the lives of other Black sharecroppers in the Mississippi Delta by revealing their stark reality of being unaware of their right to the ballot. After Hamer learns she has the right to vote, she joins the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in 1962 and begins her career as a civil rights activist.

In chapter two, Blain begins by detailing the story of Sandra Bland, a Black woman who mysteriously died in police custody in 2017, to show the continuum of state-sanctioned violence that permeates Black women's lives. Hamer, just like Bland, experienced violence at the hands of the state when she was forcibly sterilized in 1961 and was violently beaten in a Winona jail in 1963. Blain situates



Hamer's experience in a broader context to show the experiences of Black women in Sunflower County, and the reader learns that more than half of the Black women were forcibly sterilized in this county in the 1960s.

Chapter three discusses how Hamer emphasized the importance of centering everyday people in the fight for freedom and how contemporary Black women also see this significance. Blain centers the story of a contemporary Black woman that led grassroots initiatives after the death of Breonna Taylor in 2020 with the goal of bringing awareness to her story. Blain could have begun the chapter with the story of George Floyd, a Black man who was also killed by police in 2020, and the grassroots activism that transpired afterwards. But in choosing to center the murder of a Black woman, she remains committed to her overall goal of the book.

The last chapter, "Try to Do Something," covers the anti-poverty campaigns that Hamer initiated in her home county in the mid-1960s. She established a Freedom Farm that was able to feed local starving families and give jobs to local people. Blain again bridges Hamer's life to the lives of other Black Mississippians, and as a result, the reader learns that in 1960, three-fourths of all families in the Mississippi Delta lived below the poverty line.

The question that drove this biography is: What might we learn, and how might our society change, if we simply listened to Fannie Lou Hamer? In an attempt to answer this question while privileging Hamer's unique perspective, Blain organizes

the biography thematically and incorporates the speeches of Hamer, oral and written interviews, newspapers, and archival documents. She includes primary sources from The University of Mississippi archives, University of Southern Mississippi's Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage, the Fannie Lou Hamer Papers from the Amistad Research Center at Tulane University, among many others.

Not only is Blain's storytelling bottom-up, but the source materials exemplify her commitment to piecing Hamer's story together with sources that privilege her viewpoint. Implementing strategies from her public history training, Blain avoids using academic jargon which demonstrates her commitment to reach a broader audience. This method of storytelling reveals that Blain is seriously invested in not only uplifting marginalized Black women in her scholarship, but also ensuring that ordinary people beyond the academy are able to immerse themselves in the lessons of Hamer, which is the true way to honor Hamer's legacy.

Sierra Phillips  
The Ohio State University

***Land of Milk and Money: The Creation of the Southern Dairy Industry.*** By Alan I Marcus. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2021. Acknowledgements, illustrations, notes, index. Pp. ix, 317. \$50 cloth. ISBN: 0807176052.)

Beginning in the 1920s, dairy processing plants began popping up in rural towns all across the South—kicking off a thriving southern dairy industry

that many hoped would serve as a panacea for the cotton South's economic problems. Veteran historian of agriculture, science, and technology Alan I Marcus, in his work *Land of Milk and Money: The Creation of the Southern Dairy Industry*, traces the rise of southern commercial dairy from its beginnings in Starkville, Mississippi, through its expansion across the South during the early decades of the twentieth century.

Marcus argues that the Borden Company, a northern-based milk producer with a strong desire to expand into the South, found a willing partner in the city of Starkville, which itself sought to move away from economic dependency on cotton without departing too far from its agricultural roots. With support from boosters in town and farmers in the countryside, Borden's new Starkville milk condensery plant brought the town a measure of economic success and freedom. As Marcus shows, the success of Borden's Starkville condensery kicked off the rapid growth of the southern dairy industry as other small southern towns fought to make dairy their own golden ticket to economic prosperity.

Using newspapers, chamber of commerce records, and local and USDA agricultural reports, Marcus begins with a discussion on the New York-based Borden Company in the years before and immediately after World War I. Facing labor strikes and a highly competitive northern milk market, Borden used innovative advertising strategies—including everything from hiring nutritionists to hosting cooking classes—to pull ahead of competitors. Advertising alone was not enough, however. Marcus

analyzes Borden's further efforts to diversify production and geographic location, first by building a successful new condensery plant in Fort Scott, Kansas, before looking even farther south for expansion.

Meanwhile, small southern towns were in crisis. Marcus discusses how a rising fear plagued Starkville and other small towns struggling to maintain their economic footing in the face of plummeting cotton prices. For Starkville boosters, dairy production seemed like a promising way out. Local farmers remained skeptical, however, even though the region's natural grasses made cultivating cotton difficult. Not giving up, agricultural advisors encouraged farmers to raise cattle alongside cotton, allowing the cows to graze on the pesky grass in return for supplying farmers with milk to sell and manure to use on other crops. Once convinced, these farmers made dairy farming a key part of Starkville's agricultural landscape.

Impressed with this growing dairy industry, Borden officials agreed to build its first southern milk condensery in the Mississippi town. Its success, Marcus contends, depended on continued buy-in from surrounding farmers and sharecroppers, including those within the local Black community. This alliance among northern dairy businessmen, Starkville elites, and rural dairy farmers—both Black and White—forms the heart of Marcus's book. Working together, these groups helped facilitate the "Starkville Miracle," transforming the city into a model for small town economic prosperity.

And a model it was. Marcus spends two of his final chapters

outlining how other southern locations worked to follow in Starkville's footsteps. Towns like Murfreesboro, Tennessee, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and Waco, Texas, pushed their surrounding farmers to raise more cattle so they too could attract the attention of northern milk producers like Borden, Carnation, and PET. Like in Starkville, the triumph or failure of milk condenseries and processing plants in these towns depended on their ability to galvanize local farmers into producing the milk supply necessary to yield large quantities of both liquid and condensed milk. While not all towns succeeded, the southern dairy industry, with Starkville at its center, proved profitable and resilient—even through the difficult years of the Great Depression. Here, Marcus could have expanded his analysis, as he only mentions the Depression briefly in a short appendix. A deeper dive into the Depression years may have helped to further cement his argument about the importance of dairy to the New South economy.

But wanting to read more hardly constitutes a complaint, and Marcus's well-researched and well-written work on the southern dairy industry astutely adds to growing literature on the New South as it transformed from its dependency on King Cotton to the corporatized Sunbelt, home to enterprises like Walmart, FedEx, and Coca-Cola. Analyzing the southern dairy industry in this context highlights the role of southern small towns within this process and how an alliance between rural and urban helped to make it possible.

Kaitlin A. Simpson

University of Tennessee, Knoxville

***Black Bodies in the River: Searching for Freedom Summer*** By Davis W. Houck. (University Press of Mississippi, 2022. Preface, notes, index. Pp. ix, 153. \$99 cloth, \$25.00 paper. ISBN: 9781496840790.)

During the aftermath of one of the most significant mass movements of the twentieth century for Black Lives, rhetoric scholar Davis Houck contributes a timely book to civil rights movement historiography in *Black Bodies in the River: Searching for Freedom Summer*. In this work, Houck analyzes the 1964 murders of James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, Henry Dee, and Charles Moore to show how the rhetoric surrounding the search for their bodies—specifically, the assertion that multiple bodies were discovered in the river prior to locating Chaney, Schwerner, and Goodman—has influenced historical memory. This assertion, he argues, served a purpose for major civil rights organizations in the state who were seeking to provoke the federal government into assisting with their work by insinuating that the Black bodies exhumed while searching for the missing civil rights workers were nameless and obsolete when compared to Goodman, Schwerner, and Chaney. According to Houck, many movement veterans claimed “that murdered Black men in Mississippi matter/mattered far less—to the nation, to the press, to the federal government—than murdered white men” (121).

Houck further contextualizes the Freedom Summer murders by detailing the 1963 Freedom Vote to show how White involvement with

Black civil rights workers in the state was intended to elicit a governmental response. The federal government's involvement after the murders of Goodman, Chaney, and Schwerner provided an opportunity to further reinforce this tactic, since many Mississippians believed that the government intervened only because of the murders of Goodman and Schwerner, both of whom were White. In contrast, Mississippi's long history of brutality against Blacks went unnoticed.

The 1964 Freedom Summer—considered an “invasion” by Mississippi's White establishment—contributed to a rise of anti-Black violence in the state. Under the leadership of Samuel Bowers Jr., nearly all of the Ku Klux Klan klaverns in the state prepared for the rise of civil rights activity that summer. By discussing the lives of Moore, Dee, Chaney, Schwerner, and Goodman, Houck “aims to document the extent of racial hatred that motivated their killings, including what these civil rights workers faced on a daily basis” (xi). Throughout the summer of 1964 in Mississippi, there were many racial incidents involving civil rights workers. According to Freedom Summer historiography, many of these incidents have been either overlooked or ignored. According to Julian Bond, the “master narrative” of the civil rights movement privileges Whites who traveled to Mississippi in the summer of 1964 over the native Mississippians who were active in the movement.

Houck's historiographical intervention forces us to rethink how we write about and teach Freedom Summer, which is a critical part of the civil rights narrative. Houck goes

beyond Bruce Watson's popular narrative, *Freedom Summer: The Savage Season of 1964 that Made Mississippi Burn and Made America a Democracy* (Viking Press, 2010), and Doug McAdam's *Freedom Summer* (Oxford University Press, 1990), both of which in his opinion privilege “white intercession over Black activism” (98). Houck's contribution uses rhetorical criticism and historical acumen to detail the narrative surrounding Freedom Summer and how public memory surrounding the major events of the summer of 1964 was subsequently misconstrued. In particular, he details how museums and historical markers in Mississippi have been influenced by how the events surrounding Freedom Summer are remembered. Houck's book intervenes to set the record straight. He meticulously probes newspapers, monographs, interviews, films, biographies, and memoirs about Freedom Summer to show how it has been remembered. The narrative is well organized and clearly written. *Black Bodies: Searching for Freedom Summer* should be read by anyone interested in Freedom Summer and public history.

Robrecus Toles  
The University of Mississippi

***Mississippi Zion: The Struggle for Liberation in Attala County, 1865–1915.*** By Evan Howard Ashford. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2022. Acknowledgements, illustrations, notes, index. Pp. ix, 233. \$99 cloth, \$25 paper. ISBN: 9781496839732)

The story of African Americans in Mississippi is one of liberation, not reaction or declension, according to Evan Ashford's *Mississippi Zion*. Focusing his attention on Attala County, which lies in the central part of the state, Ashford contends that scholars have treated African Americans, post-emancipation, as lacking true power because their attention has largely focused on the period from Reconstruction to Jim Crow—a period marked by its systemic narrowing of political access. By contrast, Ashford argues that this singular attention to political power ignores the reality that many of the White minority's attempts to control and limit African Americans were a direct response to assertions of Black agency. Historians have narrowed their focus to African American responses to White power. They have often described Black agency within the environment of Black-majority counties of the Mississippi Delta, or have limited their studies to neat periodization. Ashford instead argues that, by examining Attala County through an era of liberation—which he marks as the fifty years between 1865 and 1915—a more nuanced picture emerges of African American power and control.

*Mississippi Zion* moves beyond traditional narratives of Reconstruction—and its demise—arguing that

liberation (both as a concept and period) defined the experience of both the newly freed and succeeding generations. By combining the longer historical perspective with the framing of liberation, Ashford is able to articulate a vision of African American activity and to identify that vision manifested in new forms of control by freed African Americans. Ashford wishes to combat the framing of the period as one of African Americans as powerless because they lost elected offices following Redemption. Rather, he emphasizes that it was the exercise of newly granted freedom and control that prompted the backlash on the part of White Mississippians.

Ashford's focus on Attala County (African Americans were a sizeable minority but never a political majority), and his use of genealogy provides a perspective that illuminates how a liberation mentality took root in various families over succeeding generations and shaped the community over time. Additionally, the attention to individuals and their achievements is an excellent reminder that historians must not let narratives of control and domination overshadow the identities and moments of agency that exist in the historical record. For example, though Kosciusko Industrial College came to prominence during the period of Redemption, it also contributed a number of graduates, who Ashford has identified, as going on to contribute to Black Attala and beyond. For example, Dr. Leroy Dabbs, a graduate of Kosciusko Industrial College, attended Meharry Medical College before eventually serving in the World Medical Association of the United Nations in 1946. Dabbs and the nu-

merous other names, some of whom appear only briefly, are recorded in Ashford's pages as emblematic of the constant push for liberation.

Experts of the period may contend that Attala County is like so many other counties in Mississippi grappling with what emancipation and freedom mean. Ashford's conceptual framing of liberation, however, as well as his thorough tracing of families and individuals found in: court documents, WPA materials, census records, personal diaries, and photos (some of which he began collecting at age eleven) help to distinguish this localized study of liberation and control in the decades following the Civil War in Mississippi. The various characters and narrative details make this a work suitable for undergrads, the general public, and experts, who can glean nuances from this unique county-level study, to complicate the study of post-Reconstruction Mississippi, even as they recognize its outlier status.

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